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ABSTRACT

This paper examines aspects of the use of puppets with young children and provides guidelines on proper times for puppet use, basic movements, and patterns. The use of puppetry in dramatic play provides young children with opportunities for refining communication skills and defining self. Puppetry provides a means for children to explore their feelings and gain an understanding of the feelings and ideas of others. In addition to the affective attributes of puppetry, the use of puppets by young children provides practice in muscle movement and eye-hand coordination. The use of puppets can be extended across the curriculum. (RH)

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USING PUPPETS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Presented at the Annual Conference
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Using Puppets With Young Children

Abstract

Dramatic play for young children involves the component of role-playing. One method which provides a non-threatening experience in role-playing and refining communication skills is that of puppetry. In this paper, how to's and why's of using puppets with young children are examined. Guidelins of when to use, basic movements, and patterns are presented.

Using Puppets with Young Children

Introduction

Young children who have developed a strong sense of self are ready to refine basic communication skills, verbal and nonverbal. Research has suggested that in order for young children to develop an understanding of point of view as it relates to communication, one technique which has been successful is that of dramatic play.

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Dramatic Play

Dramatic play is an activity in which children explore, experiment and reinact real life. Within dramatic play, children use unlimited imagination. It provides them with a vehicle for reversing roles and putting themselves in control of a situation. Dramatic play mirrors both children's understanding of reality and their imaginative aptitude. According to Vygotsky, pretense or make-believe is a method through which children's behavior is not effected or limited by the present, and therefore it encourages abstract thinking (Vygotsky, 1967, 1978).

Through observing children who are involved in active dramatic play, information about their perceptions, sense of relationships, frustrations, how they solve problems and what they find enjoyable can be determined (DeHaven, 1988).

According to Heathcote, while children are participating in dramatic play, they "take-on" the point of view of the character whose role they play (Heathcote, 1983). This is important in helping children develop a greater awareness of their own point of view and concept of self. Drama emphasizes the individual and the development of self (McCaslin, 1974). According to Way, dramatic play can be simply defined and rationalized as "to practice life" (Way, 1967).

The self concept of a child is important to the learning process. A feeling of self-worth can be considered as a prerequisite to learning or at least a foundation for achievement. Children should be urged to voice their ideas while respecting the ideas of others (Hamilton and Flemming, 1990). Each child should be accepted as an individual without emphasis on the level of development. Dramatic play provides a non-threatening means for young children to develop self-concept.

Puppetry

One component included in dramatic play is that of role-playing. In role-playing, children are able to talk to each other about actions and roles they are taking whild developing their own identities (Christie, 1982). One method of role-playing which stimulates

communication and creativity on the part of the child is puppetry. In using puppets, children are not required to respond with their own bodies, yet are actively involved. Anything that a person can do can be done with puppets (Roundtree, B.S., Shuptrine, M.B., Gordon,J.F.,&Taulor, N.Y.,1981).

Young children are especially enthusiastic about puppets. In using puppets, it is important to remember and help young children understand it is the puppet, not the child, that takes the part of the actor. Talking for a puppet is extremely important for shy or self-conscious children who would otherwise be limited in creativity by nervousness (Petty,W.T., Petty, D.C., & Salzer, R.T.,1989). Puppet theatres can be designed so that the children are at least partially hidden. The design of the theatre is especially important so that the focus of attention in puppetry is the puppets, and not the children.

Puppetry can be extremely motivating, however, too often the effort and creativity is focused on the construction of puppets rather than in using them. In general, children derive more satisfaction from simple puppets than they do from more difficult ones. Basic puppets that children can h elp plan and make are most beneficial (Fischer, 1990). Young children will lose interest if a puppet takes too long to make.

Another point for consideration is that of the operation of the puppet. Children who have to focus on the operation of the puppet cannot be absorbed easily into the role they are playing. The

disruption of thought processes will make language flow more difficult and will become a stumbling block for students who have a low level of security or poor self-concept.

Summary

The use of puppetry in dramatic play is one method for providing young children with opportunities for refining communication skills and defining self. Puppets can become the voice for shy children, without the threat of being responsible for the words of the puppet. Puppetry, in its most basic form is a means for children to explore their own feelings, while gaining an understanding of the feelings and ideas of others.

In addition to the affective attributes of puppetry, the use of puppets by young children provides practice of muscle movement as well as eye-hand coordination. For young children, especially those who have slow physical development, puppetry provides practice without exposure.

In conclusion, puppetry provides many benefits for young children within the classroom. The use of puppets can be extended across the curriculum as well as a fun, individual activity for children to complete on-their-own.

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1. Rules of Movements
   - There are three basic hand movements; finger, wrist, arm.
   - Move only the puppet that is speaking. The others *FREEZE*.
   - Movements should be clean and distinct.
   - Move only on important words, reactions or moods. Not on every word.
   - Keep movements simple.
   - Don't let puppet sink.

Finger	Wrist	Arm
Yes	No	Walk
Hello, Goodbye	Bashful	Hop
Come here	Looking up	Run
Clap	down	Jump
Think: scratch head	around	Fall
tap hand	Bow	Comic Cry
Point	Turn	Sneeze
Creep	Sweep	Snore
Cry	Bigger Cry	
Sneeze	Sneeze	
Snore	Snore	

2. Rules of Voice
   - Large voices for larger puppets. Small voice for small puppets.
   - If more than one puppet on stage—use contrasting voices. (high-low, old-young)
   - Speak clearly—watch diction. Project.
   - Develop voice (and personality) for each puppet.

3. Rules for Props
   - Use large props because easier to see and handle. More Comic.
   - Always practice before using a prop (Try in front of mirror).
   - Use props that are unbreakable.
   - Use a prop only if it is necessary for plot or humor.

4. Rules of Play Production
   - Select a simple idea such as:

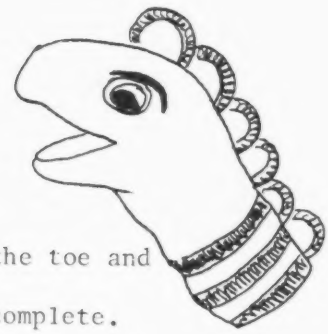
A joke	A cause
Legend, Myth	Song Title
Fairy Tale	Historical Movement
Poem, Ballad Bible	Story
Holiday	Current Event

   - Each skit must have:
     Introduction of plot and character
     Develop relationship between characters
     Development of plot, climax
     Ending
   - Limit number of characters
   - Keep speeches short. "Action speaks louder than words" in puppeteering.
   - Clarity is essential.
   - Make use of music, sound effects, lighting.
   - Keep backdrops simple.

SIMPLE PUPPETS

Glove and Sock Puppets

Old mittens, gloves, or socks may be made into simple hand puppets. On mittens and gloves the thumb forms the lower jaw for a side view of a character, or the palm or back can be the face.



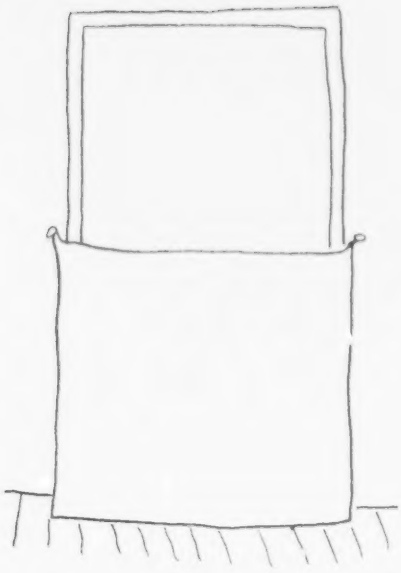
Old socks can be used as-is or cut across the toe and a mouth sewn or glued in. Add buttons and yarn to complete.

Basic Mitt and Hand Puppets

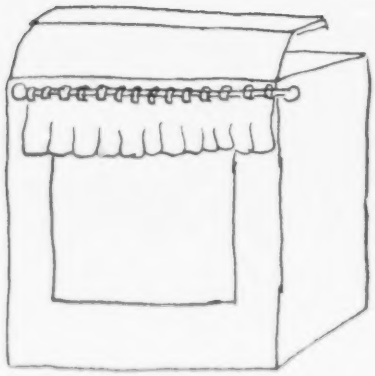
To make a basic hand puppet, cut two pieces of fabric or felt to fit the child's hand. The basic mitt puppet is made from felt or paper and is a rounded U. These basic patterns may be decorated in any way to make different characters.

PUPPET STAGES

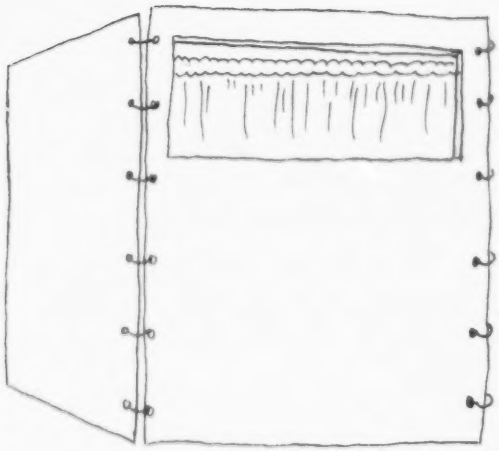
The simplest stages are the best because they are easy to set up, dismantle, and store.



Door



Large carton



Hinged theater